Governors' Agenda

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This Term's Issue

I	Editorial What's in it for me?	Page 2
II	Unpacking the dilemmas of promoting British Values	Page 3
III	Green Paper: Schools that work for everyone	Page 9
IV	Ofsted Annual Report 2015/16	Page 16
V	Governors need to up their game in challenging school/academy, says Ofsted	Page 22
VI	Call to raise the profile of and provision for mental health in schools and academies	Page 25
VII	Safeguarding threatened in privatised system	Page 28
VIII	The National Funding Formula beckons schools/academies will feel the winter chill of financial reductions	Page 31
IX	*NowTeach* seeks to lure industrial compatriots into teaching	Page 33
X	Data from international tests rain down in Autumn 2016 like confetti	Page 36
XI	Glossary of terms used in this issue	Page 40

Tel 020 8346 3222
david_r_sassoon@yahoo.co.uk
www.governorsagenda.co.uk

Editorial: What's in it for me?

As we stand on the cusp of another US Presidential inaugural address and, with bated breath, wait to hear what the newly elected President-designate, Trump, has to say on 20 January 2017, I cannot help recalling John Kennedy's speech 56 years ago, in particular, his stirring conclusion: "And so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country……..Finally, whether you are citizens of America or citizens of the world, ask of us the same high standards of strength and sacrifice which we ask for you….."

We have just come out of the festive Christmas season. In many households, the occasion brought a glut of excess – over-eating, over-sleeping, over-drinking and everything else that could smack of degeneracy. However, it was also a season of giving. In particular, I am thinking of the thousands, if not millions, of those who gave up their own celebrations to be of comfort and bring happiness, joy and companionship to those that were much less fortunate than themselves. In particular, I pay tribute to Crisis at Christmas, which established centres all of the country, providing succour to thousands of homeless people – with warmth, food, drink, medical attention and counselling. This would not have been possible without an army of volunteers.

Britain punches well beyond its weight when it comes to volunteering. While there is a cadre of people here and abroad who obsess with the what's-in-it-for-me when it comes to asking them to do anything, there are many others who are selfless and seek nothing more than making it better for all of us.

Amazing work has been done by volunteers not only in this country but also all around the world. At school in India, I was fortunate to learn at the feet of a wonderful headteacher, who averred that countries that were rich were rich not because of how much they creamed off from the rest of the world but rather how much they gave to it.

This notion is, perhaps, epitomised by a river, which constantly runs with fresh water. Water that flows in also flows out spawning life in its currents. On the other hand, the Dead Sea is where water comes in but nothing goes out. The upshot is that it is so salinated that not only is one able to float but also nothing lives and grows in it.

We appear to be living in a "Me, me, me" era. However, millions are not seduced by those that are intoxicated by this kind of life. Rather, they see their role as making the conditions of others better – knowing full well that they come onto this planet in the altogether and will leave with nothing – except their legacies.

The world was saddened to learn of the sudden demise on Christmas Day 2016 of George Michael, the world-renowned singer and part of the former Wham duo. However, people were uplifted to learn that he was not only an amazing talent but also had a generous heart. Instances of his humanity were

numerous: the occasion when he confidentially donated £15,000 to the woman who lost on the *Deal or No Deal* programme to fund her IVF treatment, the millions of pounds he gave to *Childline* provided that his donations remained anonymous, his donations to the Terrence Higgens Trust, the £100,000 he gave at regular intervals to *Help a London Child*, the waitress he tipped £5,000 to assist her pay towards her student nurse debt and the manner in which he remembered the NHS nurses who cared for his mother. It was only after he had died that we became aware of his monumental generosity.

Schools governors are one of the biggest groups that give generously of their time and talents gratis. While some are motivated by the lure of control and power, anecdotal evidence suggests that most are concerned with leaving a positive impact on the children in their schools'/academies' care. They bring to bear their professional expertise from the world of work and in some cases wisdom from the insights that they have gave through living worthwhile, productive lives.

I, personally, have been privileged to work with and for many such people who want nothing by way of recognition – in cash or kind. They are a pretty amazing lot who add value because of what they want to do for our education system rather than ask of the system what it can do for them. The spinoffs for many are great. In the world of paid work, they capitalise on the experiences they have had as school governors developing professionally in their daily, paid jobs.

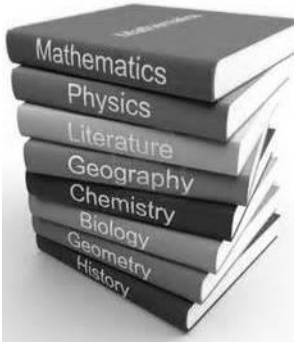
However, they are not in it for material gain. The work they do for our schools, consequently, is priceless. During the festive season, I could not help thinking of them. In a clumsy way, I salute them. For one person, at least, school governors' labours are recognised and appreciated. May they continue to flourish in 2017 and beyond.

Unpacking the dilemmas of promoting British Values

Are we losing our way in promoting British values? Take two recent test cases.

I A tale of two incidents

(a) In early November 2016, British Gymnastics suspended Louis Smith, the UK Olympian, after he appeared in an online video in October 2016 with his friend and former gymnast, Luke Carson. The video shows him pretending to pray to Allah while laughing. British Gymnastics issued a statement: "Louis Smith admitted his behaviour was in breach of the Standards of Conduct. The panel upheld the allegation and, taking into account a previous breach of the Standards of Conduct heard in June this year (where it also was made clear to Louis the consequences of any further breach), the panel determine a cumulative penalty was appropriate and order a two-month period of suspension……"



Twenty-seven-year-old Smith accepted offers to learn more about the Muslim faith after admitting he had been "ignorant to people's religion".

(b) Later in November 2016, a row broke out over free speech following a government ban on 32-year-old Milo Yiannopoulos, a right-wing journalist, after an invitation extended to him by sixth former pupils at his former secondary school, i.e. Simon Langton Grammar School for Boys in Canterbury, Kent. Yiannopoulos is the editor of the far-right news website, Breitbart. The Department for Education's Counter Extremism Unit cancelled the arrangement over safety concerns and the "threat of demonstrations at the school".

Yiannopoulos, labelled by Claire Fox, Director of the Institute of Ideas, a "notorious troll and Donald Trump supporter", is a colourful character, to say the least, who has described feminism as a cancer, called Islam the real culprit of race culture and said women who are offended online should just "log off".

However, the decision to cancel the journalist's talk caused a major row over free speech. More than 200 – 220 to be precise - sixth form students had signed up for the event – with parental permission.

Yiannopoulos wrote: "My old high school has been bullied into cancelling my talk …. by the 'counter-extremism' unit at the UK Department of Education. Who even knew the DoE (sic) had a counter-extremism unit? And that it wasn't set up to combat terrorism but rather to punish gays with the wrong opinions. Perhaps if I'd called the speech 'Muslims are awesome' they'd have left us alone. Disgusted."

A Simon Langton student encapsulated the feelings and thoughts of many of his peers when he said, despite disagreeing with Yiannopoulos's opinions, he felt the decision to ban his talk was "wrong". He observed: "I feel the old adage applies: 'I disagree with what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.'"

The school, which expelled Yiannopoulos when he was a student, stated that objections to his talk had come almost "entirely from people with no direct connection to Langton".

"The staff and students of the school were overwhelmingly in favour," said Dr Matthew Baxter, the Headteacher. "While disappointed that both, the pastoral care and intellectual preparation we offer to our students, have been called into question, we, at Langton, remain committed to the principle of free speech and open debate, and will resist, where possible, all forms of censorship."

II British Values – Dilemmas

So, what is the lesson that emerges from these two incidents? Voltaire, the French thinker, said: "I may not agree with what you say but I will defend to the death your right to say it." It does not follow that you agree with what someone says when defending her/his right to say something. When cancerous thinking lurks in the mind of a person, there is merit in letting her/him articulate it so that it may be challenged and, if possible lanced with counter-arguments. History is filled with stories of dictators who have savagely made martyrs of great thinkers who have confronted them with their evils. However, their thoughts have lived on in the minds of others who have then overthrown these dictators. The most potent way of fighting an idea is with another idea.

That British Gymnasts suspended Louis Smith and the government banned Yiannopoulos from making a speech at Simon Langton School was questionable.

Both these incidents encapsulate the dilemmas schools and academies face promoting the British values of democracy, the rule of law, mutual respect and individual liberty. The problems relate to squaring one with the others. For instance, where does mutual respect end and individual liberty begin? Is free speech constrained by religious sensibilities? At what point is democracy – evinced through expressing opinions – breaching the rule of law?

Should Louis Smith have been punished? Surely he could not be accused of racism because he was not mocking people for the colour of their skin, over which they have no control, but rather their belief over which they do. In a democracy, we are constantly challenging one another about our belief systems. In literature we satirise and ridicule them.

It is impossible to go through life without being offended. However, where we engage in religious mockery to incite hatred of a special ethnic group we cross a red line which becomes unacceptable e.g., where people ridicule Judaism to stir up anti-Semitism. This is justifiably proscribed under the 2006 Act.

Banning Milo Yiannopoulos has been a case of stifling democracy – in that it not only stopped him from addressing the sixth-formers but also prevented students from interrogating his bizarre right-wing views. After all, democracy is about giving pupils/student voice. In this case, that voice was smothered.

III Rights and Responsibilities

There is no gainsaying the fact that rights go with responsibilities. The right to be heard must be coupled with the responsibility to listen to others. The right to be safe and healthy go hand-in-hand with the responsibility to keep oneself and others safe and healthy. The right to learn cannot be divorced from the responsibility to do one's best at all times. The right to have friends is coupled with the responsibility to be kind to others and the right to be oneself with the responsibility to respect others' differences.

Many of those who espouse liberalism lead the intolerance charge. They represent a real threat to institutional and teacher autonomy and democracy (to boot) while having the chutzpah to claim that they protect freedom.

Interestingly, the teacher unions who have been hyper-critical of government interference in schools, supported the DfE and attacked Simon Langton School for inviting Yiannopoulos. Christine Dickinson, the local secretary of the NUT censored the school for inviting a person "well known for his inflammatory views to speak to their pupils without contest". ATL's general secretary, Mary Bousted, argued that schools have "a duty of care" when exposing "pupils to extreme views". However, Fox rhetorically questions: "Who define 'extreme'?" Bousted added: "School is a place where pupils have a right to feel safe." But do we have to accept the unions' definition of safety, or can someone else's take on it be accepted?

Just prior to the planned Yiannopoulos visit, fifty academics from the Universities of Kent and Canterbury pretentiously declared: "It is our duty as independent members of the British education system and academic and scientific community to demand responsibility from the school's administrator and urge them to take back the invitation to Mr Yiannopoulos."

There is a tragic hubris in this kind of reaction because it ends up making a martyr of someone who is fatally flawed and insults sixth formers for assuming that they are unable to think for themselves and challenge a person's warped thinking.

At the heart of the Prevent dilemma is determining where free speech ends and indoctrination begins. Perhaps the 220 Simon Langton pupils should have the last word on this subject when they signed an open letter stating: "Our goal is not to support Milo, but to pursue the truth and interrogate rhetoric."

IV Implications for the Curriculum

The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of pupils in all independent and free schools and academies state that to meet the standards proprietors/headteachers/principals must discharge the following functions.

i. Actively promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

ii. Ensure that principles are actively promoted which -

- enable pupils to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence;
- enable pupils to distinguish right from wrong and to respect the civil and criminal law of England;
- encourage pupils to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative and understand how they can contribute positively to the lives of those living and working in the locality in which the schools are situated and to society more widely;
- enable pupils to acquire a broad, general knowledge of and respect for public institutions and services in England;
- promote tolerance and harmony between and among different cultural traditions by enabling pupils to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures;
- encourage respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010; and
- encourage respect for democracy and support for participation in the democratic process, including respect for the basis on which the law is made and applied in England.

iii. Prevent the promotion of partisan political views in the teaching of any subject in the school.

iv. Take such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that where political issues are brought to the attention of pupils they are offered a balanced presentation of opposing views. This should be:

- while they are in attendance at the schools;
- while they are taking part in extra-curricular activities which are provided or organised by or on behalf of the school; or
- through the distribution of promotional material, of extra-curricular activities taking place at the schools or elsewhere.

V The Casey Review

In December 2016, the Department for Communities and Local Government published the report by Dame Louise Casey DBE CB, following a review she conducted into integrating and enhancing opportunities in the most isolated and deprived communities in England. While the review did not focus entirely on schools, some observations were made and recommendations proposed to help promote opportunity and integration in schools.

Dame Louise highlighted concerns about lifting the 50% cap on faith-based admissions criteria in new free schools (advanced in the Green Paper, *Schools that work for everyone*) and the wellbeing of children who are being educated in segregated, supplementary and unregistered illegal faith schools. The report makes several recommendations for government, which include the following.

1) The promotion of British laws, history and values within the core curriculum in all schools would help build integration, tolerance, citizenship and resilience in our children. More weight should be attached to a British Values focus and syllabus in developing teaching skills and assessing schools' performance.
2) The government has included a social need criterion in the allocation of free schools funding and should now move to work with school providers and local communities to encourage a range of school provision and projects to ensure that children from different communities learn alongside those from different backgrounds, perhaps purchasing sites in the areas of highest segregation in advance and encouraging Multi-Academy Trusts to have a diverse range of provision.
3) The government should step up the safeguarding arrangements for children who are removed from mainstream education, and in particular those who do not commence mainstream schooling at all. All children outside mainstream education should be required to register with local authorities and local authorities' duties to know where children are being educated should be increased. It should also consider the standards against which home education is judged to be clear that divisive practices are not acceptable in any setting.

   While every parent has the right to choose what is best for her/his child, local authorities must be satisfied that children are not put at risk. Ofsted and the Charity Commission should be resourced to support additional central and local government action to ensure the safeguarding of all children in mainstream and supplementary educational environments.

Finally, the report makes recommendations about those holding public office. In particular, it stated:

4) "We expect the highest standards in all civic leaders in selflessness and integrity, so too we should expect all in public office to uphold the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect for and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs and for those without faith. The Government should work with the Committee for Standards in Public Life to ensure these values are enshrined in the principles of public life, including a new oath for holders of public office."

The report – which is 199 pages long – is preceded by a useful executive summary. It can be read in full, **here**.

VI Conclusion

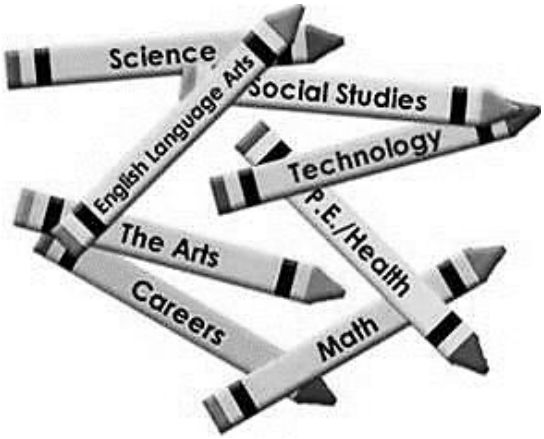
Promoting British values is easier said than done. Take, for instance, developing an atmosphere of tolerance and creating harmony among different cultural traditions by enabling pupils to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures. What if a particular culture intrinsically disparages other cultures? Do we become intolerant of it and if so, how can we comply with this regulation? What if promoting a culture means that sexual equality goes out of the window? How does that square with the Equality Act?

In schools, good teachers are keen to encourage youngsters to think for themselves, to resolve their own conundrums, come to their own conclusions. Would this mean that they should be allowed to question some aspects of the Prevent Strategy? If they do so, are they to be reported to the authorities? And if teachers don't report, would they be hanged, drawn and quartered?

A number of years ago, schools had Citizenship on the curriculum. This was dispensed with by the coalition government. The curricular vacuum was rapidly filled with radicalism which motivated young people to blow themselves up in the hope that they would be rewarded richly in the hereafter. Writing in *The Jewish News* on 22 December 2016, Maajid Nawaz, a Muslim and the founder of Quilliam, the world's first counter-extremism think thank established to address challenges in citizenship and identity, said that the radicalisation process involves four factors – grievances, recruiters, identity and ideology. All four need to be addressed in a non-partisan way if we are to win hearts and minds.

Giving space to pupils to grow and develop could well result in their taking up entrenched positions that could subvert some aspects of legislation. However, if they are to learn to fly, they need that space to articulate the unpleasant that might otherwise remain buried and create sufficient energy for a volcanic eruption of disastrous proportions.

Punishing Louis Smith with suspension and banning Milo Yiannopoulos from addressing sixth formers at Simon Langton Grammar School doesn't help.



Green Paper
Schools that work for everyone

I Preamble

On 12 September, the Government published the Green Paper, *Schools that work for everyone*, which the Department for Education (DfE) has taken off the website. The deadline for responses was 12 December 2016. We now have to wait on the Secretary of State, Justine Greening, to give the nation a steer on where she wishes to go from here.

The Green Paper proposed a number of recommendations which, if implemented, will affect four discrete institutions:

(1) Independent Schools
(2) Universities
(3) Selective Schools
(4) Free Schools which are faith orientated

The proposals were issued against the background of increasing pressure on school places – especially good ones. Primary numbers grew by 11% between 2010 and 2016. This will feed into the secondary sector for the rest of the life of this Parliament. The most recent projections are that the primary school population is estimated to increase by a further 174,000 (3.9%) from the current year to 2020. The secondary school population will rise by 284,000 (10.3%) over the same period.

While the Green Paper made it abundantly clear that the government would continue to support schools with the Pupil Premium Grant to promote the education of the most socially deprived children in our system – i.e. those entitled to free school meals (FSM) and in care - it expressed government concerns that those children whose families just fail to qualify - i.e. the just about managing (JAM) - were being short-changed.

Children entitled to FSM come from families in one of these classifications. Those in receipt of

(1) Income Support
(2) Income-Based Jobseekers Allowance
(3) Income-Based Employment and Support Allowance
(4) Child Tax Credit
(5) Working Tax Credit
(6) Universal Credit

This effectively means that if either parent/carer is earning more than £16,190 annually, the child does not qualify for FSM. In January 2016, the national average for those entitled to FSM was 14.3%. The

government is, however, worried about children in families on modest incomes who do not qualify for such benefits but are, nevertheless struggling financially.

Information on the educational achievements of such children is opaque as it melds with data on those who come from well-heeled backgrounds. Accordingly, the first two questions that the Green Paper posed for us were as follows.

(1) How can we identify such children?

(2) How can we better understand the impact of policy on a wider cohort of pupils whose life chances are profoundly affected by school but who may not qualify or apply for free school meals?

So what plans does the government has for the four groups set out above?

II The Detail

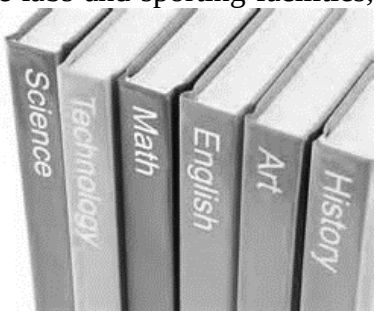
(a) Independent Schools

Independent schools with capacity and capability will be expected – in recognition of the benefits they derive from their charitable status - to do the following.

(i) Sponsor academies or establish free schools in the state sector where the government will meet the capital and revenue costs but where the independent schools will have responsibility for securing their success.
(ii) Offer a certain proportion of places as fully funded bursaries to those who are insufficiently wealthy to pay fees. The number of such places will be considerably higher than that currently offered at most independent schools.

Not all independent schools will have the capacity to produce the above goods. Accordingly, the government suggested in the Green Paper that the smaller ones would be asked to fulfil one or more of the following functions.

(i) Provide direct school-to-school support with state schools, which could be through staff exchanges, teacher development, personal support between heads of department and, generally, the sharing of good practice. Joining Teaching School Alliances, the Green Paper posited, was the best way to make contributions to teacher development.
(ii) Support teaching in minority subjects which state schools struggle to make viable, such as further mathematics, coding, the classics and languages i.e. Mandarin and Russian.
(iii) Ensure their senior leaders become directors of multi-academy trusts to give strategic steer and leadership and provide experienced staff to be governors.
(iv) Provide greater expertise and access to facilities such as science labs and sporting facilities, and music and drama.
(v) Provide sixth-form scholarships to a proportion of pupils in each year 11 at a local school.



(vi) Help students with their university applications.

(b) Universities

The Green Paper acknowledged that some of our universities provide excellent support to schools. For instance, King's College, London, opened a specialist sixth form college – King's College London Mathematics School – under the Free Schools programme – to encourage young people across London with talent in mathematics to pursue highly academic options. As a consequence, 100% of KCLMS students received an A* or A grade in mathematics in 2016 with 83% gaining the A* grade!

The Royal Society of Arts Academies have an effective partnership with Warwick and Birmingham City Universities. The universities are planning to develop a range of opportunities to include the following.

1) Pupils will participate in activities at the universities. University subject specialists will visit and give talks to the pupils.
2) The universities will promote continuing professional development at the academies and support them in research and evaluation.
3) University staff will target those academies which have relatively low numbers of students going on to Higher Education (HE) with subject-specific access programmes for those at Key Stages 4 and 5.
4) The universities will increase the understanding of the students, parents and teachers of the application process and the financial arrangements, including sources of financial support for lower-income families.

However, the government believes all universities could and should play a direct role in raising attainment in schools to widen access. Accordingly, the paper proposes that the following requirements would be made as a condition for allowing them to charge higher fees.

(i) Establish new schools in the state system for which capital and revenue funding would be made available and/or
(ii) sponsor academies in the state system.

In addition, universities would be asked to consider the following.

(i) Support schools through being members of their governing bodies or academy trust boards.
(ii) Assist with curricular design, mentoring of pupils and other educational support.
(iii) Provide human resources, teaching capacity – for example in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) - and finance support.

(c) Selective – i.e. Grammar – Schools

Currently, there are 163 grammar schools in England educating 166,000 students – i.e. 5% of state secondary youngsters. Ten local authorities have a wholly selective system and another 26 LAs one or more grammar schools. Legislation prohibits the creation of new selective schools and debars non-selective schools from becoming selective. However, existing selective schools – subject to the Secretary of State's approval – can expand through annexes on- or off-site separate from the main

school provided that the offer to students is fully integrated with the teaching and learning in the rest of the school. For instance, the ex-Secretary of State Nicky Morgan permitted Weald of Kent Grammar School to expand in Sevenoaks.

Grammar schools are popular with the parents of pupils who secure places. The Green Paper did not say how unpopular they were with the rest. There is no denying that grammar schools provide excellent education for students of all income groups who attend them. Ofsted has judged that 99% of selective schools are good or outstanding. Of these, 80% are outstanding as compared to 20% of comprehensive schools. However, 2.5% of students in selective schools are eligible for free school meals compared to 13.2% in all state-funded secondary schools. This begs the question: "Will we be discriminating against the most disadvantaged by increasing the number of grammar schools?"

Notwithstanding, the Green Paper pressed on with its belief that grammar schools would open up opportunity for all. Accordingly, the plans include the expansion of existing grammar schools (which does not require primary legislation) making available dedicated funding of up to £50 million a year for this purpose.

Additionally, the Paper sets out the following proposals for comment.

(i) Permit the establishment of new selective schools by removing the existing restrictions on selection subject to meeting certain conditions. These will be a new cadre of free schools which could have 100% of its intake on the basis of ability.
(ii) Permit existing non-selective schools to become selective.

The Green Paper proposed "a menu of options to ensure that new or expanding selective schools contribute in a meaningful way to improving outcomes for all pupils". The measures are to be as follows.

(i) The (new) selective schools would take a proportion of pupils from lower income households.
(ii) Establish new non-selective secondary schools (where new selective ones are created) with capital and revenue costs paid for by the government.
(iii) Establish feeder primary schools in areas with higher density of lower income household to widen access with the capital and revenue costs paid by the government.
(iv) Cause the selective schools to partner with existing non-selective schools within a multi-academy trust or sponsor an underperforming and non-selective academy.
(v) Ensure that youngsters have the opportunity of joining the selective schools at different ages i.e. 11, 14 and 16.

In an attempt to demonstrate even-handedness, the Green Paper set out sanctions for the new selective schools if they under-performed. These were to be as follows.

(i) Remove access to any additional funding streams.
(ii) Remove the right to select by ability either temporarily or permanently.
(iii)Restrict access to growth.

Existing selective schools would be expected to take on responsibilities to support children at non-selective schools. Strategies would include the following.

(i) Selective schools were to engage in outreach work to raise aspirations, improve educational practice and promote wider access. These schools will be expected to work with neighbouring primary ones to identify individual pupils – especially the socially disadvantaged - who could benefit from targeted activity. This could be done through teacher and pupil exchanges, shared resources and/or financial support for transport and uniforms.

(ii) Selective schools would have to ensure that the pupils they admit were representative of their local communities – giving priority to pupils entitled to the Pupil Premium Grant.

On a tangential matter, Multi-Academy Trusts would be able to introduce a selection criterion on ability for those academies that are outstanding as hubs and centres for the ablest pupils with a view to providing a more challenging and targeted curriculum.

(d) Faith Schools

Altogether 7,000 out of 20,000 state-funded schools in England are faith schools. The vast majority are either Church of England (67%) or Catholic (29%). Faith schools and academies are allowed to give preference for admissions when oversubscribed to children who espouse their faiths. Voluntary aided faith schools, including those which converted to academies, are able to select up to 100% of pupils on the basis of faith. Faith schools, however, may choose to open up a proportion of places to children of other faiths or none.

New academies and faiths schools – opened under the Free Schools programme - have a cap on faith admissions of 50% of places. The purpose has been to promote inclusivity. The Green Paper questioned the effectiveness of this arrangement and hinted that it had done little to promote community cohesion. With minority faiths, i.e. Islam, Judaism, Sikhism and Hinduism, the intake is predominantly from similar ethnic and religious backgrounds. Additionally, the admission arrangements have had unintended consequences with the Catholics, because those espousing Catholicism refuse to set up schools where they would be compelled to take children from other faiths.

Accordingly, the Green Paper proposed that scrapping the 50% rule for new free faith schools by creating the following criteria for them.

(i) Sponsors for free faith schools will have to prove there is a demand for school places from parents of other faiths.

(ii) New Free Schools will be required to have twinning with other schools not of their faiths.

(iii) Sponsors will be required to consider setting up mixed-faith academy trusts, including sponsoring underperforming non-faith schools.

(iv) Require the governing body of a new Faith School to appoint an independent member or director who is of a different faith or no faith at all to secure a wider perspective beyond the faith that the school espouses.

III Commentary

The first point to make is that a Green Paper is a tentative government foray to test future legislative waters – a consultation document tossing up policy proposals for debate and discussion. While it makes government proposals on a given issue, the government is uncommitted to translate it into legislation. Previous Green Papers have come to nothing, a recent one being on special needs.

However, the outcome of a consultation on a Green Paper could well result in the government publishing a White Paper, which will then spawn an Act. The White Paper is authoritative and unpacks a complex issue setting out government's thinking on the action it wishes to take in the future.

Should we, consequently, take *Schools that work for everyone* seriously? Absolutely. At the time of writing this, the Department for Education did not reveal how many responses it had received from the stakeholders and other members of the public on the proposals. However, judging from press reports there is considerable disquiet about the document.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the government has antagonised three of the four groups being asked to do more with less – i.e. universities, faith schools and independent schools. The proposal to expand selection, however, succeeded in the government making many enemies out of former friends.

Leading the charge is Sir Michael Wilshaw, the former Chief Inspector of Schools. He sharply warned government that opening up more grammar schools would be "a profoundly retrograde step", which would damage disadvantaged children. He added that grammar schools' record of admitting children from poorer backgrounds was "pretty woeful". Selective education worked against the poorest children, he remarked.

In an interview with *The Times Educational Supplement,* Sir David Carter, the Department for Education Commissioner, who oversees the academy system, warned against introducing selection within Multi-Academy Trusts. In particular, he highlighted two challenges.

The first was around parental choice. "…if you demarcate one of your schools as being the centre of excellence, and my child, for whatever reason, could not get a place in the centre of excellence, the school I have chosen becomes the school I can't go to anymore," he said.

The second involved supporting the most-able children. "I think the best MATs I work with have a really secure model for how they develop their able children," he said. "Actually changing the structure of how education is delivered in a MAT might get in the way of that."

Professor Tom McLeish, Fellow of the Royal Society and Chair of its Education Committee said; "New research commissioned by the Royal Society shows that in wholly selective local authorities, students receiving free school meals (FSM) achieve lower grades in GCSE mathematics. In these areas, there are also fewer FSM students taking double or triple science GCSEs. These are subjects which open doors for young people.

"…..We support the Government's commitment to ensuring all students fulfil their potential regardless of their backgrounds. However, we are concerned that the approach to selective education outlined in

the Green Paper may only support the small number of high ability disadvantaged pupils who do attend selective schools at the cost of disadvantaged pupils who do not.

"Schools that work for everyone must place priority on ensuring that all young people receive high-quality science and mathematics education which equips students with the skills they need to prosper in a rapidly changing world. Irrespective of the role of selective schools in our education system, our schools must support students from every background to fulfil their potential."

James Bowen, Director of the National Association of Headteachers Edge, a teaching union for middle leaders, fulminated in a TES article, stating "Surely children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) should be central to educational policy. But it is now quite clear that they are not. A document entitled *Schools that work for everyone* that does not mention children with special educational needs and disabilities, as is the case with the government's Green Paper, is difficult to take seriously."

The education data website, SchoolDash, carried out an analysis in the dying days of 2016 of the effects of grammar schools. It found that:

1) disadvantaged pupils were underrepresented in all grammar schools but particularly in partially selective areas;
2) the GCSE performance of low and medium ability pupils was slightly worse in fully selective areas than among otherwise similar schools in non-selective areas;
3) non-selective schools in selective areas tend to have lower entry rates in certain subjects, such as geography, chemistry, English language, English literature and history (compared to similar non-selective schools in non-selective LAs);
4) at 16, there were slightly higher progression rates from key stage 4 to key stage 5 in selective areas compared to otherwise similar non-selective areas; there were also higher rates of progression to sixth forms and lower rates of progression to further education colleges;
5) selective areas show higher rates of progression from state schools to the most selective universities; and
6) in selective areas, a much lower proportion of pupils attend private schools.

The research may be accessed in full at ***Do grammar schools work for everyone?***

In their annual survey of governors, the National Governors Association (NGA) and *The Times Educational Supplement* (TES) discovered that 78% did not agree with the government proposal to expand selection and 82% of secondary school governors would not introduce selection in their own schools/academies.

In 2010, Michael Gove, then Secretary of State for Education, published the White Paper, *The Importance of Teaching.* The thrust of the paper had little to do with teaching and everything to do with school structure. He opened the floodgates to academisation.

The nomenclature of this Green Paper issued by Justine Greening, the present Secretary of State, is *Schools that work for everyone.* Will what she proposes create good education for all? The evidence suggests that it will do anything but……

We are living more than 32 years after George Orwell wrote his famous *1984*, where he invented the language, Newspeak In Newspeak, words took on new meanings, generally the opposite to what they were meant.

I am also reminded of Humpty Dumpty's exchange with Alice in *Through the Looking Glass*, when he said, referring to the meaning of "glory" as being "a nice knock-down argument", "When **I** use a word, it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less."

The evidence is self-evident: selective schools are not going to work for everyone. Rather, they are likely to disadvantage those who need the most help. However, the government appears to be resolute about going back to the future, even though the nation's most vulnerable will be severely damaged. The Labour Party – the opposition in Parliament – has an impotent and ineffective leadership and the nation is preoccupied with Brexit. Would this be a good time to bury bad news by scrapping the Green Paper or will the government slip it into legislation? Time only will tell.

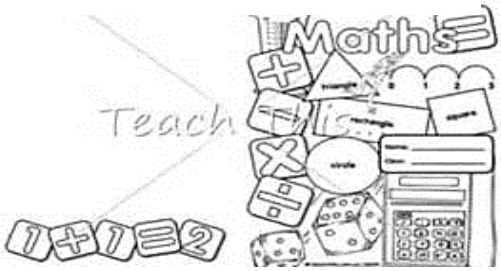
Ofsted Annual Report 2015/16 I

Preamble

Sir Michael Wilshaw, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools (HMCI), published his fifth and final Ofsted annual report on the education system in England on Thursday, 1 December 2016. He retired 30 days later. In presenting the report, Sir Michael said "a world class education system is within our grasp – but only if serious capacity challenges are urgently addressed".

Sir Michael stressed that a north/south 'geographical divide' meant the ablest pupils in the North and Midlands were less likely to reach A/A* at GCSE. He said: "Standards can only truly be considered high if they are high in every part of the country and for all pupils regardless of background or ability."

However, his report is, in the main, positive. The country's schools/academies, he avers, had made progress over the last five years. Educators could be justly proud. "Young people are getting a better deal than ever before," he said. School/academy leaders responded well to the changes in the system. The decision to replace the "satisfactory" judgement with "requires improvement" led to schools/academies upping their game,



making a greater effort ensuring that pupils are offered the very best possible education. Of the former 4,800 satisfactory primary schools/academies, 79% were now good or outstanding and, of the previous satisfactory secondary ones, 56% were good or better.

II Key Points

The main issues and findings of the report were as follows.

(1) Education for children below the age of 11 is stronger than ever. That there are more good and outstanding primary schools/academies, nurseries, pre-schools and childminders (altogether 91%) is creating a level playing field for children – whatever their backgrounds. The proportion of good and outstanding primary schools/academies rose from 69% to 90% in five years.

The focus on reading and systematic synthetic phonics has been a particular strength. The successful emphasis on reading, writing, spelling and grammar, however, is sometimes resulting in a narrower curriculum.

(2) Education for children above the age of 11 has improved, but not everywhere.

(3) The reading ability of pupils eligible for free school meals at age seven in 2015 was 6% closer to the level of their peers than five years ago.

(4) Secondary schools/academies also improved. Altogether, 78% are now good or outstanding compared to 74% in 2015. However, schools in the North and the Midlands are dropping further behind the rest of the country. The progress of the ablest children and provision for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are both particularly affected by this divide.

Also, the education of youngsters from the ages of 11 to 19 is strongest for pupils studying an academic curriculum aimed at university entrance. For pupils not destined for university, especially those who don't achieve well by the age of 16, there are fewer high-quality options available that lead to good qualifications and destinations.

(5) Schools have successfully increased the proportions of pupils going on to complete the academic qualifications needed to be accepted into universities. However, for those going directly into the workforce, only a minority of schools prioritise giving them a solid preparation for the world of work. University Technical Colleges (UTCs) should be a clear route of pupils focused on technical or vocational pathways, but barriers to teacher and pupil recruitment mean that the performance of these schools to date has been variable.

(6) Pressures on the supply of secondary teachers continues unabated. Fifteen of the 18 curricular areas had unfilled training places in 2015/16. There were 2,500 fewer secondary school teachers than the previous year and the secondary pupil population was set to rise in the coming years.

(7) Secondary schools that improved in 2015/16 did so by focusing on the professional development of teachers and middle leaders. They drew heavily on external sources of support including high-

performing local schools which are now in greater supply in some parts of the country than others.

(8) Academic level 3 study programmes (equivalent to A-Level standards) were working well regardless of where they were provided, particularly where there were large numbers of A-level students. In small sixth forms where the number of A-level students was too low to enable the school/academy to offer specialist teachers across the curriculum, provision was less successful. Technical and vocational level 3 student programmes and those below level 3 were now working as well.

(9) In some parts of the country, fewer than 40% of pupils in receipt of special educational needs and disability (SEND) support were progressing well. Local areas were tracking the progress of these pupils less systematically, compared to pupils with statements of education, health and care plans (EHCPs). However, local areas were becoming more accurate in their identification of children and young people who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Consequently, the proportion of pupils identified as needing special educational needs support is at its lowest point in a decade.

(10) Only one in four primary schools had good arrangements in its assessment system, in the absence of levels.

(11) The gap had started to narrow between children eligible for free school meals (FSMs) and their peers reaching a good level of development (GLD) by the age of five. Take-up of funded early education for the disadvantaged two-year-olds had increased. However, there were still 6,000 disadvantaged children aged two in inadequate nurseries.

(12) Transition from primary to secondary school continues to be a point where some pupils begin to fall behind. The mistrust between primary and secondary schools around transition contributes to a failure to share information about assessment and the curriculum or to understand it fully when it is shared.

(13) The proportion of good or outstanding general Further Education (FE) colleges declined from 77% in 2015 to 71% in 2016. Full-time students are required to retake English and/or mathematics if they do not secure a C grade at age 16. For general FE colleges, this resulted in an increase of 156% in the number of students studying GCSE English over the last three years. Many colleges struggle to recruit enough teachers in English and mathematics.

(14) The supply does not meet demand for high-quality apprenticeships at level 3, with available data showing around nine applicants for every vacancy. There are some signs in good quality apprenticeships and schools are doing more to raise awareness of apprenticeships as an option.

(15) Altogether, 65% of prisons and young offender institutions have learning and skills and work activities that are not good enough. By a wide margin, this is the least successful aspect of our education and skills system. Many prisoners have primary school-level reading ability. Successful completions of English and mathematics qualifications are nine percentage points lower this year compared with four years ago.

(16) Most institutions provide safe places for children and young people of all ages. However, on occasions, leaders and managers do not regard the safety of young people as a high priority, other than to satisfy external scrutiny. In other cases where safeguarding is found inadequate, it is because leaders and managers are ignorant about what is required. This is sometimes because they have extended the reach of what they are delivering without finding out what the implications will be for the pupils and learners involved.

(17) In the independent sector, 12% of those serving primary-aged pupils and 15% of those serving secondary-aged pupils are inadequate. The proportion of good and outstanding schools declined in both phases two years in a row. In schools that declined, leaders and managers had not kept on top of the quality of teaching or up-to-date about how to keep children safe.

(18) The scale of unsafe practice being uncovered in providers suspected of operating illegally is a serious concern. However, local authorities have become more alert to the need to identify potentially illegal or unsafe practice. In cases where problems have been identified, local authorities have intervened quickly to make sure children in their areas are kept safe.

(19) Sir Michael had little to say about school governance other than make the blindingly obvious statement that at the root of much school/academy failure is weak governance. However, some of his inspectors surveyed schools/academies with the specific objective of looking at governance. Inspectors visited 24 recently improved schools/academies in some of the poorest areas of the country. Neither the types of schools/academies nor the structure of governance were the reasons for the original weaknesses in governance. Rather, to improve, governors needed to become more self-aware. Two-thirds of the schools/academies surveyed had not engaged in any self-evaluation of governance prior to being found to be less than good.

Governors in schools where leadership is questionable need to develop the professional knowledge, understanding and insight about the functions of their boards. However, in the 1,600 responses for Ofsted's call-for-evidence, governors said that it was difficult to access high-quality professional support and training. National Leaders of Governance and Professional Clerks are in short supply. Also, three-quarters of the respondents said that it was difficult to recruit and retain good and committed governors.

(20) The performance of Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs), which were inspected, is variable. There are 33 MATs in which fewer than half of the academies are good or better, including five of the largest MATs. MATs with the largest number of secondary academies vary in their value-added scores. [Most of the 5,800 academies in England are now nearly 800 MATs.]

In March 2016, Sir Michael wrote to the then Secretary of State for Education, Nicky Morgan, to report that, following the inspection of seven of the largest MATs, he was concerned about the quality of education in them. Despite having operated for several years, many of these trusts showed the same weaknesses as the worst performing local authorities. Pupils in them made poor progress – especially at Key stage 4 and disadvantaged pupils generally. He highlighted the following weaknesses, in particular.

- Leaders had inflated views of the quality of teaching.

- There was not enough scrutiny of pupils' progress.
- There was a lack of strategic oversight by the trusts.
- There was a lack of urgency to tackle weak leadership in academies.
- There was confusion over the roles and responsibilities of the trusts and the local governing bodies of the constituent academies.

To counter-balance this, his inspectors also visited some of the best performing MATs earlier last year. Their strengths were as follows.

- They had executive leaders who had a proven track record of turning around failing schools.
- Leaders had a clarity of vision.
- There was urgency to assist pupils/student reach higher standards, especially for disadvantaged pupils/students.
- There were clear, delegated frameworks of governance.
- There was intelligent use of assessment information so that potential problems could be anticipated (and tackled).
- Staff development was an important priority, which assisted in improving staff recruitment and retention. For example, the ARK MAT reported that 86% of its newly qualified teachers (NQTs) were still teaching within the ARK academies five years after qualifying. Many had secured leadership positions early in their careers.

III Commentary

(1) During Sir Michael Wilshaw's watch, unquestionably, there have been considerable improvements made to the provision of schools and academies. He raised the bar by replacing the judgement of "satisfactory" with "requires improvement", reduced the notice period for an inspection to half-a-day and revolutionised all our mind-sets by stamping on our penchant for making excuses for schools/academies that have to educate pupils from socially deprived backgrounds. However, "becoming better" does not mean that we have got there.

There is a worrying North-South divide in standards with growing concerns about the former. There are 12% fewer good and outstanding schools in the North and Midlands than in the South. Sir Michael's analysis concludes that these areas struggle to recruit and retain the best teachers and leaders. His panacea is that the government appoints a "Minister for the North" to "bang a few heads together".

But this could have unintended consequences as a punitive approach could drive away good headteachers. Sir Michael was an immensely successful Headteacher. However, using strategies that he might have used as Headteacher could well be detrimental to the one that he is proposing for improvements in a much larger arena – such as North England and the Midlands. We first have to try and understand what are the factors for pupil underachievement and diagnose the educational disease before finding the appropriate remedies. Regional problems are often plagued with greater complexities than those in any one individual school/academy.

Nevertheless, what was heartening were his remarks – when presenting his report – about what will not work, i.e. an increase of selective schools across the country.

(2) Unsurprisingly, Sir Michael and his troops have provided evidence that structure is much less important for school improvement than the quality of teaching and learning. He has shown that just as there are strong local authorities there are also effective MATs; poorly performing MATs have the same negative characteristics as failing LAs. Collaborating institutions are more likely to be better performing than those that working in isolation. Historically, LAs had the responsibility of promoting good working-together arrangements. Some operated with considerable aplomb and others failed spectacularly. Similar scenarios are being replicated in MATs.

(3) Sir Michael mentions that the number of pupils with special educational needs has gone down. However, there is no reason to celebrate because one of the key drivers for the reduction is that there is less funding to support them. Accordingly, mainstream schools are focusing their energies on supporting them as much as possible before turning to their local authorities for assistance in constructing Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). Also, because local authorities are increasingly finding themselves in financial straits, they are less inclined to investigate potential cases of child abuse: they do not have the capacity to do so. In this connection, schools and academies are reminded of Henry Ford's exhortation: "Chop your own wood and it will warm you twice."

(4) The Cinderella of education, Further Education (FE), continues to be neglected and remains in the backwaters of provision. However, if we have to make a success of apprenticeships, the government will need to address this area. Robert Halfon, the Minister of State for Education, has responsibility and is doing everything he possibly can. He needs to be supported by the Chancellor and the Prime Minister if he is to succeed.

(5) Teacher recruitment continues to be a "chestnut". A shortage of teachers, especially in the secondary sector, is a blight on the provision our school/academy staff members are making. Sir Michael states that 15 out of 18 curricular areas had unfilled training places in 2015/16. Altogether, only 82% of training places were filled. There were 2,500 fewer secondary school teachers in 2015/16 with the secondary roll set to rise. Deprived areas are suffering more than most – especially the North-West.

Sir Michael's own words resonate. "We need more and better teachers, and we need them now." He cites this issue as the biggest threat to the quality of education in England. His report states that the proportion of teachers leaving the sector in 2015 was at its highest for some years.

One reason trotted out by ministers is that the economy is doing well so that fewer young people are opting to become teachers. However, there are other factors such as a punitive accountability system, the focus on a narrow curriculum – endless literacy and numeracy - to the neglect of other disciplines and extra-curricular activities, league tables and the more attractive salaries and living arrangements provided to teachers in other countries – particularly in Luxemburg, the United Arab Emirates and China.

(6) I would be failing in my duty if I closed this brief commentary without paying tribute to the sterling work that Sir Michael has done over his five-year tenure, living up to the now famous epithet of the former Secretary of State for Education, "My hero!" He has left a great legacy and all of us would want to wish him well as he begins the rest of his life. Despite the heart problems which have afflicted him during his tenure, I find it impossible to believe that Sir Michael will want to put his feet up.

Governors need to up their game in challenging school/academy leadership, says Ofsted

The schools' inspectorate Ofsted published a new report in December 2016 on the state of school governance, called Improving governance: Governance arrangements in complex and challenging circumstances.

The report is based on 2,632 responses to Ofsted's public call for evidence last autumn, 96 routine inspections or monitoring visits, and dedicated visits made by inspectors to 24 schools which had recently improved standards. The report outlines the barriers faced by governors in these schools and the actions taken to strengthen their professional skills to fulfil their roles.

Ofsted's report stated that governors often lack the necessary skills and training to challenge school leaders effectively. At one institution, the governing body accepted a senior leader's assurance that the school budget was in a healthy position. A week later, the governors discovered that the school had a deficit of more than £300,000.

Weak governance is associated with governors' lack of knowledge about pupil progress and achievement or budget management at their schools/academies. Governors' failure to challenge their headteachers follows from this lack of knowledge, according to the report. "When inspectors judge the leadership and management of a school to be less than good, a common underlying weakness is the failure of governors to hold school leaders to account," the report states.

More than 2,000 respondents also told Ofsted that **recruitment and retention of governors** was a challenge. This was especially so in the poorest areas of the country. "The challenge in finding governors with the necessary knowledge and skills was often greater for those schools that were in areas where unemployment was high and qualifications low."

In one school, **parent governors** told inspectors that they knew that teaching and learning were improving only because their own children had told them so. "On all of these boards, governors did not have enough knowledge about their roles and responsibilities," the report stated. "These weak governing boards rarely looked outwards and often failed to **keep up to date with developments in education**. They tended to pay little attention to pupils'

outcomes."

Consequently, governors lacked the ability to raise important issues, or to ask probing questions. They became over-reliant on their headteachers' version of events.

Weak governance often remained undetected until the school/academy was inspected by Ofsted. Two-thirds of the schools/academies surveyed had not identified any weaknesses in governance until Ofsted had judged the schools/academies to be less than good.

I Findings and Conclusions

The key findings of the report were as follows.

1) Many governors lack the expertise needed in an increasingly complex education system to hold school leaders to account.
2) Governors need better access to highly skilled people who have the educational expertise to help them meet the increased demands of their role.
3) Recruitment and retention of governors is a serious challenge, particularly in some of the poorest areas of the country.
4) Clarity about lines of accountability, roles and responsibilities is an essential part of effective governance.
5) Weak governance, including in some of the poorest areas of the country, is at risk of going undetected until the school is inspected by Ofsted.
6) Paying the chairs of governing bodies can act as a means to achieving a professional and open relationship between governors and school leaders.
7) Governors from within the community make an essential contribution, particularly in areas of deprivation.

II Recommendations

Ofsted main recommendations to Governing Bodies, Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) and the Department for Education were as follows.

(1) For Governing Boards

Governing boards of all schools/academies should do the following.

(a) Ensure clarity of roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability for governance, particularly where multi-level governance makes accountability complex.

(b) Publish information about governance on the school website in line with statutory requirements or the academy funding agreement to ensure transparency and clarity of roles and responsibilities[1].

[1] 'What maintained schools must publish online', Department for Education, updated November 2016; www.gov.uk/guidance/what-maintained-schools-must-publish-online and 'What academies, free schools and colleges must publish online', Department for Education, June 2016; www.gov.uk/guidance/what-academies-free-schools-and-colleges-should-publish-online.

(c) Ensure that they have robust review methods in place to assure themselves that their boards are effective.

(d) Secure professional support and governor training as needed to ensure effective governance.

(2) Multi-Academy Trusts

Multi-academy trusts should undertake the following.

(a) Review schemes of delegation annually and ensure that clear lines of accountability, back to trust board level, are understood and effective.

(b) Publish each academy's annually reviewed scheme of delegation on the website of the multi-academy trust and ensure that local governing boards, where they exist, fully understand their roles and responsibilities.

(c) Ensure that local governing boards use support from experts across the trust and beyond to monitor closely the performance of the academies where they have delegated responsibility for doing so.

(3) Department for Education

The Department for Education should consider publishing national quality standards to encourage schools/academies to continue to improve governance by undertaking robust self-assessment and making use of their findings

III Reflections

The National Governors Association (NGA) was not surprised by these findings as they confirmed its own (findings) on what makes an effective governing body. NGA's long-established eight elements of effective governance set out the blocks needed for good governance. The absence of one or more blocks inevitably leads to less effective governing boards.

The NGA's eight elements of effective governance are

i. having the right people around the table;
ii. understanding roles and responsibilities;
iii. good chairing;
iv. professional clerking;
v. good relationships based on trust;
vi. knowing the school/academy – the data, the staff, the parents, the children and the community;
vii. commitment to asking challenging questions; and
viii. confidence to have courageous conversations in the interests of children and young people.

The Ofsted report posited that paying the chairs of governing bodies could lead to more professional conversations with their headteachers. However, Ms Emma Knights, Chief Executive of the NGA, disputed this. "There's no evidence to show that paying governors improves governance," she said. "Given that we're all so strapped for cash, that doesn't seem a very sensible use of money right now."

Call to raise the profile of and provision for mental health in schools and academies

For the well-being of a nation to be promoted, children's mental health must be safeguarded. They are our future. We commit a heinous crime by neglecting children's welfare and happiness. However, children's mental health is taking a backseat in the provision we make for them within our schools/academies and the wider society. The focus, at times, is exclusively on a narrow curriculum dominated by English and Mathematics and, when in their teens, the English Baccalaureate.

In the 61st issue of *Governors' Agenda,* (see here) we focused on the promotion of children's mental health. It is now time to revisit this important matter, especially as there have been developments.

Emily Frith of the Education Policy Institute published in November 2016 *Children and Young People's Mental Health: Time to Deliver*. The report calls for a "high profile, national government programme to ensure a stronger focus on mental health and wellbeing within schools". The recommendations in the report – set out in three sections - are as follows.

1. Prevention

1. A sustained focus on raising awareness and reducing stigma.

2. An easy-to-understand, web-based parenting guide for all parents.

3. The establishment of a Mental Health Research Institute in order to fund research into understanding mental health, new treatments such as talking therapies or better medication, and develop the evidence base for effective interventions.

4. A strategy to empower young people to live safe digital lives, which should focus on developing young people's resilience and critical thinking skills in the face of online threats, given the impossibility of eliminating all online risk. It should cover threats such as excessive internet use, child protection, websites promoting suicide, self-harm or eating disorders (e.g. pro-ana and pro-mia sites that promote anorexia or bulimia and cyber-bullying).

2. Early Intervention

1. Nationally kite marked, easy-to-access (by drop-in, or self-referral, with no thresholds) services in every area.

2. A high profile, national government programme to ensure a stronger focus on mental health and well-being within schools. The programme would include

   - evidence-based training for teachers;
   - a trained lead for mental health and well-being in every school/academy, college and university;

- schools/academies, colleges and universities adopting the World Health Organisation's (WHO's) recommended Whole School Approach model;
- within its existing framework categories, Ofsted having regard to well-being in any inspection of a school or college;
- mandatory updated high quality, statutory Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) in all schools/academies and colleges, with dedicated time for mental health.

3. A clear strategy to improve access to the right care for young people with mental health problems from a variety of communities.

3. Delivering better treatment

1. Areas should not receive their annual share of the additional £1.4bn unless they can demonstrate that they have robust plans to improve care and all the additional funding is being spent on children's mental health and not offsetting cuts elsewhere. This should include an audit of progress in delivery of their initial local transformation plan and expenditure in 2015/16 and 2016/17.

2. The strategy should set a series of ambitious goals for care, including that no one should wait more than eight weeks for routine treatment (the current average waiting time across services).

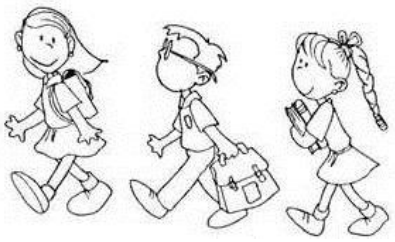
3. The Government's Workforce Strategy must be creative around workforce, exploring new ways of working and skills sharing.

4. The practice of making a young person leave their support service on their 18th birthday must end. Young people should be able to choose when to transition up to the age of 25 with support from their therapists and parents or carers. The report also highlighted a checklist for local health and care leaders based on what we have learnt about the best way to improve service provision. This covers:

   - good commissioning practice;
   - effective partnership working;
   - early-intervention and engagement;
   - workforce development and transition to adult services.

This report will be of use to the government, and local health and care leaders, in the journey towards improving children and young people's mental health services over the next five years, reducing the 'treatment gap' that was identified in the research.

The report follows prior research by the Education Policy Institute, which found that specialist child and adolescent mental health services are turning away 23% of young people referred to them for help. High thresholds for eligibility for help were identified as a barrier to early intervention, as were long waiting times for treatment where referrals were accepted.



Many schools/academies are experiencing a reduction in external support available from local authorities and other providers. Addressing funding shortfalls in these services should be a priority for government.

The National Governors' Association (NGA) and many others in the school sector have been calling for PSHE to be made statutory. Governing boards should consider how PSHE is taught in their schools/academies, whether time is dedicated to talking about mental health, and the training teachers receive.

4. Questions governors/trustees should ask

Pooky Knightsmith, writing in the November/December issue of *Governing Matters*, an organ of the NGA, sets out nine questions that governors/trustees should ask of their schools'/academies' management teams, in their endeavour to raise the profile of good mental health.

(a) Is our school/academy a listening school/academy?

(b) How aware is the school/academy community of the importance of promoting good mental health?

(c) Do we have a mental health policy?

(d) Is mental health a part of our curriculum?

(e) Have staff been trained to recognise and respond to mental health issues?

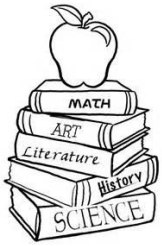
(f) Do staff know who to refer mental health concerns to?

(g) Have we usefully pooled our knowledge of local support and services?

(h) Have we considered how best to work with parents and the wider community?

(i) Are we meeting the emotional well-being needs of staff?

In March 2016, the government published advice for school staff on securing the mental health of children, *Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools*, which has some excellent pointers for governors and trustees to develop and implement robust policies in this vital area of the extended curriculum. The increase in the distress, pain, stress levels and depression so many of our youngsters experience as a consequence of poverty and the rampant misuse of social media must not be ignored but rather addressed. The government's advice in this paper and Emily Frith's report give us pointers on how we can do it.



Safeguarding threatened in privatised system

I Ofsted inspection focus

When Ofsted inspects a school/academy, the inspectors tend to focus on three issues – pupil progress (and achievement), the impact on children's progress and achievement of measures taken to assist those on free school meals (FSM) with the Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) and Safeguarding. We tend to view pupil progress in narrow terms – i.e. the distance covered by youngsters in English and mathematics – instead of their overall development. Many inspectors, sadly, do the same.

However, it is always useful for governors and school staff to draw inspectors' attention to the ground made by shy pupils who become confident, ill-behaved children who become polite, civil and helpful to others, youngsters who constantly need help and guidance who become independent learners, self-centred young people who learn to collaborate and work co-operatively and, of course, the strides made by classes of children in all the other subjects such as science, geography, history, modern languages, design/technology, art and music, among other disciplines.

While the focus must not be constrained to any one group of pupils, the government, rightly, wants to ensure that the resources it is forking out for pupils entitled to FSMs through the PPG is used well. Inspectors expend much energy ensuring that this duty is discharged properly.

However, it is impossible for children – whatever their economic condition – to make progress if they do not feel safe and are happy. Consequently, Safeguarding is the third issue which inspectors view under the microscope.

Where it is in peril, Local Authorities (LAs) have a responsibility for taking measures to redress the balance. However, in an environment where LAs have lost considerable powers and resources, safeguarding Safeguarding has become increasing difficult and daunting. The problems are being exacerbated by the "privatising" of education through an increasing number of schools (now well over 5,000) having become academies. At least this is the view of the former Chief Inspector, Michael Tomlinson, who, until recently, was Birmingham's Education Commissioner.

II Sir Mike Tomlinson's concern on Safeguarding

In an exclusive interview with *The Times Educational Supplement* (TES), he said that ministers lack powers to deal with a repeat of the "Trojan Horse" scandal, should it ever raise its head again. In particular, ministers don't have any powers to remove staff in such circumstances.

He added that ministers also need powers of intervention over a significantly increasing number of academies that were constantly underperforming. He said: "The Department (for Education) may well argue that it does have powers. But my view is that, whatever powers it has, I don't think they're sufficient to deal with the sort of situation that happened in Birmingham, nor with the situation where we have a significant proportion of academies which are described by Ofsted as 'inadequate' or 'requiring improvement'."

He said that he had raised this matter with the DfE in August 2016 but till the end of the last calendar year he had not received a reply.

Readers may remember that the Trojan Horse scandal became manifest in 2013 when Birmingham City Council received an anonymous letter alleging that some Muslim groups were plotting to take over schools in the city and run them on strict Islamic principles. Nicki Morgan, the then Education Secretary, appointed Sir Mike to oversee the council's work and redress the situation. His appointment ended in July 2016.

Ministers' powers of an academy takeover are restricted to cases where they are mismanaging their finances. In Birmingham's case, Colin Diamond, seconded from the DfE as Deputy Education Commissioner, had to "persuade" individuals at the schools to resign, said Sir Mike. There were no formal powers for him to get rid of them. (Colin Diamond is now the Education Director of Birmingham.)

There are wider implications, Sir Mike remarked, in particular, where academies and Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) were underperforming. "Even if an academy is not performing well, there is limited statutory power within ministers' hands to do much about it," he said. "How can you possibly accept a situation in which you know young people are receiving a less than good education? It is simply not possible to sit on your hands at that point. Just as a local authority can be held to account, it seems to me that there needs to be similar powers (for the government) to exercise over MATs."

When pushed further about the powers of Sir David Carter, the National School Commissioner, Sir Mike said that while he had every faith in Sir David, he was unconvinced that the Regional School Commissioners (RSCs), whom Sir David directs, had the tools to improve failing academies.

"Their main role is to help with the conversion of maintained schools into academies and to that end, obviously, that's where their focus will be," he remarked. RSCs have limited resources. While they can remove an academy from a MAT, this happens only in an "extreme situation" he said. "They can lean on a MAT, but nothing more."

III Education Otherwise

There is another threat which can act against children's safety and that is where parents/carers choose to educate their children outside of school. The law puts an onus on parents and carers to arrange for their children to be educated at school or otherwise. Most do so by seeking admission for their children in neighbourhood schools/academies. However, there are increasing numbers of pupils who are being home-schooled – in particular, in Birmingham. Sir Mike revealed in his interview that they could well be exposed to extremism. When he took over as Commissioner, there were 750 pupils being educated in "otherwise" arrangements. Two years later, when he stepped down, the number had increased to 1,000 (circa).

Across the country, many more children are being educated in unregistered independent schools and LAs have no powers to close them down. When parents/carers are challenged, if such places are discovered, they inform the officers that it is their right for them to make alternative educational provision for their children.

Across the country, a number of unregistered schools sprouted, many based on different religions. Sir Michael Wilshaw, the then Ofsted supremo, declared that these were a "serious and growing threat" to the welfare of hundreds of children. In November 2015, he warned the then Secretary of State Nicky Morgan that the number of children being educated in such unofficial schools was "far higher than is currently known" by authorities. He said that inspectors had found 15 unregistered schools educating about 800 children, some in squalid conditions and/or the apparent segregation of genders on religious grounds.

These were discovered after members of the public had tipped off the watchdog. The "schools" had exploited loopholes in the law which permitted study clubs, so that they did not need to register. Some had emphases on Islamic and Jewish religious studies, while others had no obvious religious affiliation.

Three – in Birmingham - had fire hazards and operated in "unhygienic and filthy conditions". Sir Michael said that the schools had a "narrow, Islamic-focused curriculum", with evidence of misogynistic, homophobic and anti-Semitic teaching materials. Staff members were not properly checked to work with the children. Ofsted took every possible action to close the "schools" down, but they had continued to operate. He stated that this was the case because the DfE had sent confusing and unhelpful advice to those running the "schools" saying they could apply to register retrospectively.

In 2015, Ofsted inspectors visited 162 suspected illegal schools – focusing on those in London, Birmingham, Luton, Wolverhampton and Staffordshire.

Sir Michael wanted the proprietors to be prosecuted because their "schools" represented "a serious and growing threat to the safety and well-being of hundreds of children in several English regions". He urged Nicky Morgan to review policies on tackling unregistered schools and allow Ofsted to lead prosecutions.

A DfE spokesman said that the department was happy for Ofsted to lead any prosecutions. "We agree with Ofsted that more needs to be done and will be strengthening our communications to potential providers. We are also introducing further powers to regulate settings which teach children intensively and to intervene and impose sanctions where there are safety or welfare concerns."

In June 2016, a group of ultra-Orthodox Jewish pupils nearly drowned after being taken on a hiking expedition by unqualified teachers working in their illegal school. They were draped in their traditional, Orthodox clothes instead of proper hiking gear, and did not know how to read coastal warning signs because they were unable to speak English. The children were rescued by the emergency services after the tide nearly swept them out to sea.

In November 2016, the BBC reported that Ofsted had uncovered an illegal, unregistered alternative provision centre, which was being paid £25,000 of public money for every young person it admitted. Sir Michael Wilshaw, the last Ofsted chief, feared people were "lining their pockets" looking for vulnerable and excluded children. It was bizarre that, while local authorities have a statutory duty to ensure all children get a suitable education, with children educated outside of school, their powers are limited. Officials may enter premises only if they have specific concerns over a child's safety.

Meanwhile, the government has appointed Alan Wood, the President of the Association of Directors of Children's Services and former Chief Executive of the Hackney Education Trust, to carry out a review into the future of local government in education.

In an interview with Richard Vaughan of the TES, he said that radical changes were required to safeguard pupils outside mainstream schools, pupils who could be learning in unsafe and unhygienic environments. He warned that councils should be allowed to find out what was happening to children being taught outside of school. "If someone can say, 'I am home-educating this child' they (sic) are under no obligation to tell you any more than that or to comply with any of the questions of work or where the education takes place," he said. Councils needed more clarity about their powers.

Richard Watts, chair of the Local Government Association's (LGA's) Children and Young People Board, agreed stating that children who were home-schooled were at risk. But do LAs have the capacity to inspect, given the diminution of resources and diminishing role with the expansion of academies?

With safety of paramount importance and Ofsted's continuing focus, there will be an expectation that Alan Wood produces his findings fast and an onus of Justine Greening, the Secretary of State, to act expeditiously on it.

The National Funding Formula beckons and schools/ academies will feel the winter chill of financial reductions

Justine Greening, the Secretary of State for Education, unveiled to parliament on 14 December 2016 details of the National Funding Formula (NFF) for schools. Consultations will close on 22 March 2017.

The introduction of the NFF will be a two-stage process.

(a) From April 2018, the government will redistribute the overall school/academy funding to local authorities and directly to academies and free schools in accordance with the new formula. However, local authorities will remain in control of allocating the school funding in accordance with their own, unique formulas.

(b) From April 2019, there will be a National Funding Formula (which the DfE has styled a hard NFF) and local arrangements for the sharing will be eliminated.

Altogether, 10,740 schools/academies (54%) may see an increase but 9,128 (46%) could suffer severe losses. Small rural schools/academies stand to gain and those in cities with increasing wealth will be hit. But even schools which stand to benefit will see increases outweighed by extra expenditure over the rest of this parliament, i.e. to 2020.

Ms Greening said that schools/academies could lose up to 3% of their budgets over the next two years. She told MPs: "The proposals for funding reform will mean that all schools and local areas will now

receive a consistent and a fair share of the schools' budget so that they can have the best possible chance to give every child the opportunity to reach their (sic) full potential.

"Once implemented the formula will mean that wherever a family lives in England, their children will attract a similar level of funding, and one that properly reflects their needs."

However, the National Audit Office (NAO) accused the government of not increasing schools' funding in line with inflation. The average per pupil funding will rise from £5,447 in 2015/16 to £5,519 in 2019-20. This represents a 1.32% increase over four years.

Meanwhile, schools are having to make £3 billion savings to deal with the increased salaries, the introduction of a national living wage, higher national insurance contributions and increased contributions to the teachers' pension scheme. Every school/academy with an annual turnover of £3 million or more will also have to pay the apprenticeship levy. According to the NAO, the savings schools and academies will be required to make equate to an 8% real terms cut between 2014-15 and 2019-20.

Additionally, the Department for Education (DfE) is phasing out the Education Services Grant – a slash of £615 million made over to local authorities and academies to provide for services to schools and academies.

The NAO's report criticised the DfE for not being able to reassure the world and its dog that the savings would be achievable and its failure to communicate to schools/academies the pace of savings needed.

The NFF will compensate those schools with high mobility in-year as well as with pupils economically disadvantaged but not necessarily those who marginally fail to qualify for free school meals (FSM) – i.e. those pupils from JAM (just about managing) families.

The schools/academies likely to lose the most will be in Inner London and other urban areas where deprivation has fallen recently. There are 49 local authorities set to have budgets lopped under the NFF and 101 areas will be better off.

There will be a minimum funding guarantee, which means that no school will lose more than 1.5% of its budget each year over the two financial years from April 2018.

Altogether, the budgets of 3,379 schools will increase by more than 5 per cent. The maximum in 2018-19 will be 3 per cent, and a further 2.5 per cent in 2019-20.

The schools/academies set to gain the most include the following.

- Those schools/academies that cater for high numbers of pupils living in disadvantaged areas that are not necessarily eligible for free school meals will gain. Outside London, the average gain for these schools is 1.4%.
- Schools/academies with the highest proportion of pupils with low prior attainment but which are not in areas of high deprivation will gain 2.8% on average.
- Small, rural schools/academies, will gain 1.3% on average.
- Primaries schools/academies in sparse communities that are both small and remote, will gain 5.3% on average.

Commentary

The NFF has been a long time in gestation. Councillors in poorly funded authorities have been screaming for years about the inequities of the distribution (by government) of finances to schools and academies. The per (secondary) pupil funding for some schools in Tower Hamlets is currently double that of pupils in Wokingham, for instance. The government knew that this could not be sustained.

However, it could not have chosen a worse time to bring in the changes, given that the value of the pound has plummeted, we are preoccupied with negotiating Brexit and the economy, while doing better than other advanced countries, is still trying to recover from the disasters of 2008. Would it not have been more appropriate to have brought in a national funding formula during the days of plenty when the former Prime Minister, Tony Blair, was so full of *education, education and education?* Instituting the NFF will be, according to the National Governors' Association, a fairer way of distributing what is not enough.

Notwithstanding, is there ever a good time to inflict pain? We have had more than seven years of plenty. The years of famine for many schools/academies are now following. We have now to develop the Blitz spirit of our ancestors, grit our teeth, tighten those belts, aim to generate income in entrepreneurial ways and do everything possible to minimise the negative effects on our children.

Every time I feel like criticising the government I think of the ill-conceived legacy that we will be leaving our children and our children's children – i.e. the current national debt of £1.64 trillion, which will most certainly be rising to £2 trillion by 2020.

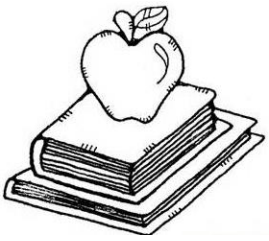
We cannot spend money that we just do not have. We dealt with scarcity in the past. Our ancestors weathered the Luftwaffe Blitz and lived to tell the tale. Developing a frugality mind-set calls for much less resilience. And, just in case we begin to feel sorry for ourselves and our children's education, we should spare a thought about the kids of Syria.

'NowTeach' seeks to lure industrial compatriots into teaching

I Teacher recruitment crisis

The number of teachers leaving the profession has increased by 11% over three years according to a report from the National Audit Office. The shortfall in teachers has been exacerbated by ministers failing to hit their recruitment targets for four consecutive years (despite a £700m annual bill for their efforts). More secondary school classes are being taught by teachers without relevant post-A-Level qualifications in their subjects – especially in physics.

When *The Guardian* did a straw poll of teachers, one told reporters, "With fewer teachers in certain subjects, some teachers have had to move over to a different department or straddle more than one. This can be a good thing if you have a brilliant teacher who can pick up a topic quickly but, more often than not, a teacher is being asked to slide into a different teaching area and offered no support.



"Maths is my subject and I know a great deal of Maths teachers without a degree. I am not saying this is the worst thing, but not having an A-level in Maths is certainly a problem for most of them. Those teachers tend to be the ones trotting out the same error-filled lessons and are understandably scared and insecure when confronted with their own lack of expertise."

A headteacher said: "We now have a situation where it's so hard to find a good head of department in certain subjects that if you promote someone to an assistant headship, for example, you have to ask them (sic) to continue doing their (sic) old job too. So someone might be a head of department and an assistant head and teach a 90% timetable. This is driving people out as it puts them under so much pressure."

A member of the leadership team at another school remarked: "A shortage of teachers means that those higher up in the profession don't have time to help less-qualified teachers. Students as well as the teachers are being let down because of it. When there's an observation or a department is being inspected, your heart sinks because you know certain teachers aren't going to be perceived as good enough. This is especially the case when you have a supply or agency teacher in as they (sic) tend to get even less support.

"Inconsistency is therefore a big issue. In certain subjects that are harder to recruit for, you might have 10-15 staff members of varying standards and levels of training and support. It's probably true that none of them gets enough support. I have waited more than six months to get feedback from a lesson observation by an assistant headteacher – by the time I got it, it was worse than useless."

II Two initiatives

Brett Wigdortz OBE, founded *TeachFirst* in 2002 to address the recruitment problems. *TeachFirst* has been not only instrumental in alleviating some of the worst effects of a continuing crisis but also drawing in the best young brains and talent that we have in the country to entice them contribute to the development of our educational provision.

In September 2013, the government initiated a scheme whereby former Armed Services Officers were to be fast-tracked into teaching. Ex-service members, who are graduates, were able to enrol on a one-year teacher-training course with a salary or £2,000 bursary. However, the scheme has been a failure. In the first cohort of January 2015, for the 1,000 places made available, there were just 41 recruits – and all of them were non-graduates. The second cohort boosted the total to 102 in February 2015. Most of them had not been to university.

Teacher recruitment – especially in certain parts of the country – continues to remain an intractable problem, and likely to become worse as the economy (despite Brexit) continues to grow. However, all is not lost.

III *NowTeach*

Lucy Kellaway is one who is spearheading a new scheme aimed to morph industry's leaders into teachers. Kellaway described teaching as one of "the loveliest jobs in the world". She has been a celebrated columnist working at the *Financial Times* for the last 30 years, writing about corporate life.

However, at the age of 57, she broke the news (in November 2016) that she was giving all this up in 2017 to train and become a mathematics teacher at a tough London state secondary school.

On 21 November 2016, Ms Kellaway launched the charity, *NowTeach*, to help middle-aged exiles from the boardroom to join her. The coming academic year, 2017/18 will be a pilot one in which *NowTeach* will be looking for experienced leaders from the private and public sectors to teach mathematics, science and languages (French and Spanish) in challenging secondary schools in London.

Ms Kellaway told Helen Rumblelow of *The Times* (22 November 2016) that a colleague said to her: "You have a very well-paid job with complete autonomy where people say that you're marvellous, it's glamorous and huge fun, and you're giving that up for a job that is badly paid, very hard work, with no autonomy and you will probably be useless at it." Her reaction to this was one of amusement; she was "utterly unmoved".

The initiative attempts to capitalise on two trends – the ageing population and a decline in social mobility – via education. On the first day of its launch, *NowTeach's* website attracted 20,000 visits and there were 100 applications.

Ms Kellaway's sister, Kate, accused her of craving the luxury of being useful. "That's right," she told Ms Rumblelow, "I really do." She describes this as "the higher order" of making a difference by altering the trajectory of underprivileged young lives through punishing effort.

She told *The Times Educational Supplement*, "There are so many people in their fifties who are either redundant or fed up with what they're doing. Why isn't there an organisation that helps persuade them that teaching might be something for them?"

She said that she was inspired by *TeachFirst*, where her daughter trained as a teacher in 2012. But while *Teach First* offers teacher-training routes to high-flying, young graduates, there didn't appear to be similar openings for those in mid-life who were trudging towards the end of their careers.

She explained that there were many things in the lives of seasoned (industry) professionals that they could bring to the classrooms, which experienced teachers were not able to offer. They had, for instance, "a deep knowledge of the outside world. The stories you tell the kids about the world are very different to those you might have if you've been a teacher all your life."

External contacts are an additional advantage. "If you've been quite successful in something else, you can pick up the phone and arrange for the kids' speakers, work experience etc."

She accepts that teacher salaries – especially in the first year – could be too low for some experienced professionals. However, people of her generation would not feel the pinch as much as young graduates because they were insulated by property ownership. "It's my feeling that the late-stage career changers may be better placed to take a very large pay cut than the early mid-career changers, because my generation got into house when that was affordable."

When confronted with the point that career changers could well be approaching retirement age and investment in their training would not result in long-term dividends, she said that teachers were already getting "very burned out" and leaving the profession early and while young.

And what about teaching stress? Ms Kellaway said: "I think that we have the sort of resilience that comes with age – at least I am hoping that's true because I'll certainly need it."

The scheme begins in 2017-18 in secondary schools. Those on the programme will train on the job. Following a two-week summer school, they will work for four days a week. Three-and-a-half days will be in schools and half-a-day in training. *NowTeach* will begin its life in the ARK network of academies and work with its teacher training scheme.

Data from international tests rain down in Autumn 2016 like confetti

In the last week of November 2016, the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) published its report on the Trends in Maths and Science Study (TIMMS). A week later, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) – an arm of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) - published its findings. Both are based on a battery of tests which samples of pupils/students took in 2015.

I TIMMS

TIMMS is a survey of the educational achievements of pupils in years 5 (aged nine-to-ten year olds) and 9 (aged 13-to-14 year olds) in 57 participating countries, as well as comparisons of the curriculum and the teaching of Mathematics and Science.

The national report for England found that while the country's maths results are now at the highest point for 20 years in both age groups, overall improvement is still lagging behind other countries. Since the first assessment in 1995, England's score in Maths increased by 12.8% for year 5 and by 4% for year 9. Despite this, the score is behind top-achieving countries who have seen more rapid improvement. The East Asian group of countries continued to perform extremely well across the assessments.

The TIMMS report focused on the pupils'

- overall performance in Maths and Science
- performance by pupil characteristics
- pupil engagement and confidence in Maths and Science
- school environment, leadership and resources
- teachers and teaching
- home environment

It emphasised the link between engagement and confidence in the subjects with overall performance. A large majority of pupils in England reported that the teaching of Maths and Science was engaging or very engaging. This was in sharp contrast to peers in the five highest-performing countries.

The full report of Tony Greany et al of University College London, Institute of Education can be found **here.**

Altogether 62 "countries" including Hong Kong in China, participated in TIMMS 2015. As in previous years, the five East Asian "countries" that participated in TIMSS (Singapore, Hong Kong, South Korea, Taiwan and Japan), together with Russia, performed highly across both subjects and year groups, although there were other countries that did well in one or more areas. A group of 'fast-moving' countries (Kazakhstan, Poland, Slovenia and the Czech Republic) saw significant improvements in one or more areas.

England came tenth in Mathematics for year 5 pupils. Northern Ireland, Singapore, Hong Kong, South Korea, Taipei/Taiwan, Japan, Russia, Norway and Ireland were in the first nine places.

English pupils in year 9 came 13th in Mathematics. In the first 12 places were Singapore, South Korea, Taipei/Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan, Quebec (Canada), Russia, Kazakhstan, Canada, Ireland, Ontario (Canada) and the United States of America.

In Science, year 5 English pupils came 16th in this international table. In the top 10 places were Singapore, South Korea, Japan, Russia, Hong Kong, Taipei/Taiwan, Finland, Kazakhstan, Florida (USA) and Poland. In year 9, English pupils ranked higher, at eighth in Science. Singapore, Japan, Taipei/Taiwan, South Korea, Slovenia, Hong Kong and Russia were in the first seven places.

The main findings of the UCL Institute of Education for English pupils in the latest TIMMS report were as follows.

(i) In 2015, the performance of both, year 5 and 9 pupils, in Maths in England was significantly above the TIMSS international mean.

(ii) Year 5 pupils' performance in Maths has increased steadily over time, improving with each TIMSS cycle from 1995 to 2015. The increase in England's score between 2011 and 2015, however, was not significant.

(iii) The performance of year 9 pupils in maths increased between 2011 and 2015, following a decrease in 2011. As for year 5, the increase between 2011 and 2015 was not significant.

(iv) For both years 5 and 9, England remains in the second highest-performing group of countries. Seven countries scored significantly higher than England in the year 5 assessment, while six scored significantly higher at year 9. England's performance was significantly higher than 34 countries in year 5 and 23 countries in year 9.

(v) The five East Asian countries and Russia were the best in year 9 Maths, the same group as in 2011. In year 5, the five East Asian countries and Northern Ireland were at the top of this league, as in 2011, but with Russia joining the group in 2015.

(vi) A larger share of year 5 and 9 pupils achieved each of the international benchmarks in England compared to the median across all participating countries.

(vii) There is evidence that the lowest performers in England are making progress since the proportion of both, year 5 and year 9 pupils, reaching the low international benchmark improved significantly.

(viii) The relative performance of year 9 pupils in England in 2015 compared to their performance as year 5 pupils in TIMSS 2011 was lower than that found in some comparator countries, including most of the highest achieving East Asian group.

II Programme for International Student Assessment

The OECD released the results of its 2015 global rankings on student performance in the Programme for International Student Assessment, or PISA. PISA is a worldwide exam administered every three years that measures 15-year-olds' standards in 72 countries. About 540,000 students took the examinations in 2015.

The examinations are taken by 15-year-olds (pupils in year 10) in three disciplines – Science, Mathematics and Reading. The results revealed that the scores across the pupils in the United Kingdom were down, though the rankings stayed similar to the ranks attained in 2012.

The top five (against those of the UK) in the three disciplines were as follows.

Science 2015	**Score**	**Mathematics 2015**	**Score**	**Reading 2015**	**Score**
Singapore	556	Singapore	564	Singapore	535
Japan	538	Hong Kong (China)	548	Hong Kong	527
Estonia	534	Macao (China)	544	Canada	527
Taiwan	532	Taiwan	542	Finland	526
Finland	531	Japan	532	Ireland	521
UK	509 (15th)	UK	492 (27th)	UK	498 (22nd)
Average	**493**		**490**		**493**

UK pupils, whose score were above the averages in the three subjects, came 15th in Mathematics (UK score 509 with OECD average score 493), 27th in Mathematics (UK score 492; OECD average score 490) and 22nd in Reading (UK score 498; OECD average 493). In every case, England did better than Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, coming 14th in Science, 26th in Mathematics and 18th in Reading.

PISA's research findings were that in the UK, the teenagers (generally) do well in Science, enjoying the subject and wishing to become scientists. There were other significant findings, i.e. that nearly 50% of 15-year-olds were taught in schools where their headteachers were concerned about teacher shortages. While the OECD recommends reducing academic selection in schools - through setting and streaming – 91.3% of pupils in UK schools were taught in ability groups.

Angel Gurria, secretary-general of the OECD, warned British ministers to take care about expanding grammar schools. But Nick Gibbs, the school standards minister, appeared to turn a deaf ear. He stated that the PISA findings could provide a "useful insight" into harnessing the expertise of selective schools. "We know that grammar schools provide a good education for their disadvantaged pupils," he remarked.

The government's own briefing note on the PISA results from John Jerrim and Nikki Shure of UCL Institute of Education, said that one argument made in favour of selective school systems was that they may help disadvantaged pupils to excel academically. However, evidence from PISA provided little support for the notion that pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds were more likely to succeed. "Rather, if anything, the opposite may hold true," the academics said.

Andreas Schleicher, director of education and skills at the OECD went further observing that there was more selection going on within schools in England than in any other country for which PISA had data. "Looking at grammar schools is the surface of the issue," he claimed. "There is a lot of separation of students that happen within schools between classes."

PISA added a warning note by way of data stating that 45% of pupils – well above the OECD average of 30% - were taught in schools where the headteachers said that there were teacher shortages. Altogether, 22% of pupils in England were taught in schools where headteachers were worried that poorly qualified and inadequate staff members were dragging standards down.

Sir Michael Wilshaw, the former chief inspector of schools, said: "We are falling behind other countries in Science, Maths, Technology and Computer Science . . . We have come from a long way back and are not as good as some of the best countries in the world. Improvement is going to be incremental . . . There is a lot to do. We are getting there too slowly."

"If you take London out of the league tables, the rest of the UK would not be doing as well. We have to address that issue," said Sir Michael.

"The big challenge for government is to raise performance in the North and the Midlands. Some big cities are really badly performing. Derby, Leicester, Liverpool and Manchester should be doing a lot better to match what is happening in London."

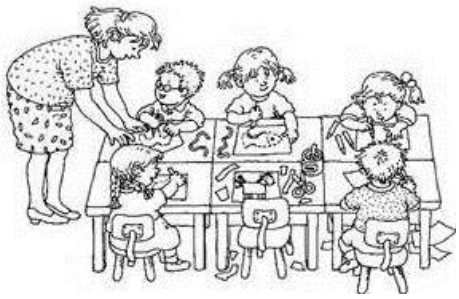
While Sir Michael acknowledged that the "rubbish" Science curriculum of the past had been scrapped, a shortage of trained teachers in Mathematics and Science was holding UK teenagers back. About 800 Mathematics and Science teaching posts are unfilled.

"Too often, inspectors see teachers teaching a specialist subject who are not specialists. I am sure that does not occur in east Asia countries," Sir Michael said.

He called on British parents to be more like those in East Asia and Poland: strict, loving and intensely focused on their children's education. "I want to see more tiger mums in England," he said.

He also said he would like to see more immigrant children from countries such as Poland — who work hard and get good results — coming to some of the worst UK schools in white working-class areas to help raise standards.

"The more immigrant children in some of these indigenous white areas the better, as far as I am concerned," Wilshaw said.



Glossary of terms used in this issue

ARK	Absolute Return of Kids
ATL	Association of Teachers and Lecturers
DfE	Department for Education
EHCP	Education, Health and Care Plan
FE	Further Education
FSM	free school meal
GLD	good level of development (applies to pupils' assessment in the Early Years)
HE	Higher Education
HMCI	Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools
IEA	International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement
JAM	just about managing
KCLMS	King's College London Mathematics School
LA	Local Authorities
LGA	Local Government Association
MAT	Multi-Academy Trust
MP	Member of Parliament
NAHT	National Association of Headteachers
NAO	National Audit Office
NFF	National Funding Formula
NHS	National Health Service
NQT	newly qualified teacher
NUT	National Union of Teachers
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PPG	Pupil Premium Grant
PSHE	Personal, Social and Health Education
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
SMSC	Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (development)
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
TIMSS	Trends in Maths and Science Study
UCL	University College London
UTC	University Technical College
WHO	World Health Organisation